US Department of the Interior
National Park Service
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

Mountain Lakes Fishery Management Environmental Impact Statement Public Scoping Meetings, March 2003

Public Scoping Meeting Handouts

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Preliminary Scope and Content of
Mountain Lakes Fishery Management EIS

PURPOSE

The purpose of taking action at this time is to develop a new management plan for mountain lakes in order to conserve native biological integrity and provide a spectrum of recreational opportunities and visitor experiences, including sport fishing.

NEED

There is an opportunity for action at this time because research studies are available that can be applied to a new mountain lakes fishery management plan in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding and Consent Decree.

OBJECTIVES

- To obtain agreement with and support from interested parties and groups to implement a new management plan for mountain lakes.
- To advance the protection and rehabilitation of native biological integrity by maintaining native species abundance, viability and sustainability.
- To provide a spectrum of recreation opportunities, including sport fishing, while minimizing impacts to the biological integrity of natural mountain lakes.
- To apply science/research in decision-making at multiple spatial scales, including the landscape, watershed, lakes cluster and individual lake levels.
- To provide full and open access to available information to the public and interested parties.
- To provide opportunities for full and open participation by the public and interested parties.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Alteration of lake ecosystem dynamics

Non-native fish have measurably changed lake dynamics and biological composition, including:

- Behavior. Introduced fish are associated with changes in amphibian behavior. Lakes with introduced fish are observed to have fewer amphibians present during the daytime, presumably due to the threat of predation.
- Abundance. The abundance of native aquatic organisms (e.g. large-bodied zooplankton, salamanders, aquatic insects and crustaceans) has been reduced by fish predation in some lakes.

- Nutrient cycling. Introduction of fish can cause changes in nutrient availability and cycling. Any introduction of fish will have an impact on the natural trajectory of lakes including nutrient changes.

Effects of reproducing fish populations
Lakes with reproducing trout populations are often overpopulated with small fish. Populations that possess multiple age classes, occupy multiple trophic levels and occur at high density can have widespread impacts on the biological integrity of lakes. Impacts from reproducing populations are typically greater than introduced sterile fish because many levels in the food chain are affected and the confounding effects of reproduction enlarge the scale for impacts.

Impacts to riparian zones
Shorelines around lakes (riparian zones) are sensitive to trampling. Effects related to trampling include erosion and sedimentation, alteration of plant communities, and reduction in food and nutrient inputs to lakes and creeks. Anglers may spend up to three times more time in riparian zones than other user groups. Impacts related to user behavior are not isolated to anglers, but extend to other user groups such as stock users and hikers.

Impacts to semi-aquatic/terrestrial species
Fish introduction or removal may have direct and indirect effects on non-aquatic species such as loons and ospreys as well as larger semi-aquatic species such as otters.

Metapopulation dynamics of salamanders and zooplankton
A metapopulation is a set of local populations, among which processes of gene flow, extinction and colonization may occur. Metapopulations are of increasing concern in conservation biology, especially with respect to the effects of the fragmentation of intact habitats into small and perhaps disconnected habitat "islands." We recognize that habitat for native biota has been fragmented by introduction of non-native fish. Does sufficient habitat (i.e. unstocked lakes and ponds) remain in the greater landscape to ensure the long-term sustainability of native populations? This landscape scale research question will need to be addressed in the EIS, though data are lacking.

Downstream dispersal
- Escapement and hybridization. In certain lakes, introduced trout may be escaping into the broader watershed and interbreeding with native fish. This could potentially harm bull trout (federally threatened) and native westslope cutthroat trout.
- Competition and disease. Introduced fish (both sterile and fertile) compete with native species and have the potential for introducing diseases and parasites.

Restoration
Restoring a lake may be a two-step process that involves removing the fish first, then reintroducing native aquatic species.
- Fish removal methods:
  Physical. Removing introduced fish using gill nets can be efficient and effective when visitation is low, lakes are less than 2 ha in size, relatively free of

woody debris and are 2-15 M in depth. However, gill nets can capture, injure, or kill birds and other non-target species.

Biological. Introduction of predator fish (e.g. tiger muskellunge) could be considered as a method to remove introduced fish species via predation. However, predator controls could have associated impacts on the environment and visitor experience.

Chemical. Piscicides (e.g. rotenone, antimycin) could be used to remove fish species when other less-intensive methods such as gill netting are insufficient.

- Reintroduction of aquatic species
  Lakes that have been rehabilitated to fishless conditions may require reintroduction of certain aquatic species in order to achieve full recovery of extirpated biota.

Unsanctioned stocking

Attempts to remove introduced fish from lakes in other National Parks (e.g. Tipsoo Lake at Mount Rainier National Park) have been illegally thwarted by the careless disregard of private individuals. This very pragmatic concern cannot be overstated: without full public acceptance, unsanctioned stocking could become a vexing management problem.

Visitor experience

- Anglers. Many anglers greatly enjoy fishing in the Complex's mountain lakes. A reduction in fish stocking would negatively affect their outdoor experience.
- Non-anglers. Many non-anglers are opposed to stocking in the Complex. A continuation of fish stocking would negatively affect their outdoor experience.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT CRITERIA

The following is a list of the various management criteria that may be considered to adaptively manage lakes and to develop Desired Future Conditions.

Fishing Opportunity	***Maintaining the Fishery***	***Physical/Chemical***	***Protecting Native Biota***
Access to lakes with fish	Density of stocking	Chemical properties	Biodiversity/biological integrity
Aesthetics	Frequency of stocking	Water temperature	Sensitive species
Stock species	Reproductive status	Depth	
Catch rate		Area of lake	
		Riparian vegetation	
		Spawning habitat	

PRELIMINARY MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

Monitoring and research of mountain lake ecosystems, and restoration of highly impacted lakes (e.g. those with high densities of reproducing fish) would be elements common to all alternatives. Any alternative that involves continued stocking in the Park will require a policy waiver.

A. No Action, or Continued Management. Continue current WDFW management in Park lakes (40 specified under MOU) and in NRA lakes (12 stocked +7 reproducing). 59 lakes total. (As required by NEPA, the *No Action Alternative* will examine existing

conditions of lakes under their current management. Existing conditions will be used as a baseline for evaluating impacts of all other alternatives.)

B. Adaptively manage the mountain lakes fishery with additional criteria to protect biological integrity. Fishery would include some subset of lakes in the Park and in the NRAs *with fish or a history of fish* (83+11), including lakes with native fish (9). 103 total lakes. (Only lakes that can be shown to protect biological integrity would be managed. This alternative would require a policy waiver since lakes within the Park could potentially continue to be stocked.)

C. Same as "B" *except* the geographic scope would be limited to the 40 Park lakes specified under the MOU and the 19 NRA lakes. 59 total lakes. (This alternative would also require a policy waiver since lakes within the Park could potentially continue to be stocked.)

D. Discontinue stocking in all Park lakes. Adaptively manage 19 (12 stocked + 7 reproducing) NRA lakes. (This alternative adheres to current NPS management policy.)

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
Mountain Lakes Fishery Management Plan
Environmental Impact Statement

The National Environmental Policy Act and NPS Director's Order #12 guide the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The EIS will evaluate the following to determine potential impacts:

- Visitor Use and Enjoyment
- Biological Resources
- Lake Dynamics and Composition
- Cultural Resources
- Riparian Vegetation
- Species of Special Concern (Endangered, Threatened, rare/declining)
- Socioeconomics
- Enforcement
- Compatibility with laws, policies, regulations

Your involvement and input are essential to the environmental process

The EIS Timeline - Where are we headed?

Accomplished Thus Far

Notice of Intent Published
January 16, 2003

↓

Scoping
(in progress)

↓

Preparation of Draft
Environmental Impact Statement

↓

Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental
Impact Statement (Oct 2003)

↓

60-day Public Comment Period
with Public Meetings (Nov-Dec 2003)

↓

Preparation of Final
Environmental Impact Statement

↓

Notice of Availability of Final Environmental
Impact Statement (July 2004)

↓

30-day Waiting Period
(July 2004)

↓

Record of Decision
(August 2004)

There are numerous opportunities to be involved in the environmental analysis process

- Participate in the scoping process and attend the scoping meetings

McAlester Lake

- Identify specific issues and preliminary alternatives

Green Lake

- Make sure you're on the mailing list to receive information on the EIS process
- Comment on the Draft EIS

Hozomeen Lake

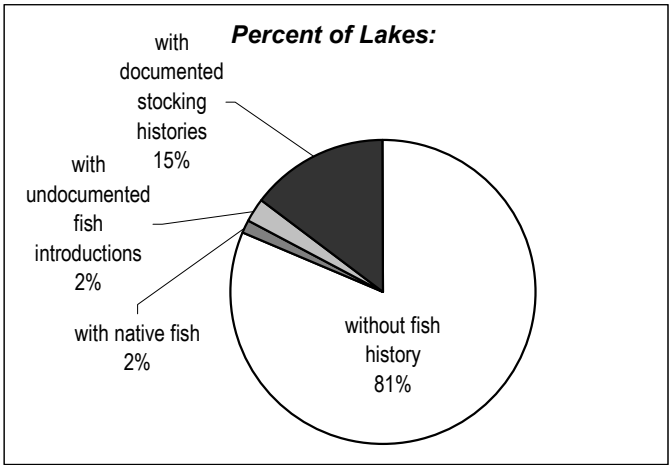
- Participate in public comment meetings for the Draft EIS
- Review the final environmental impact statement

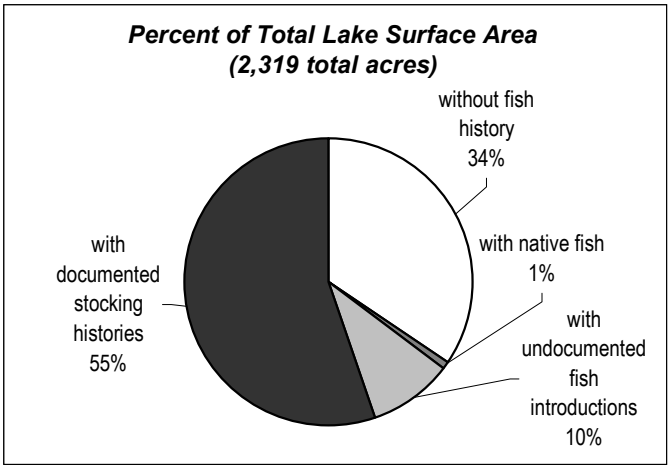
Little Skymo Lake

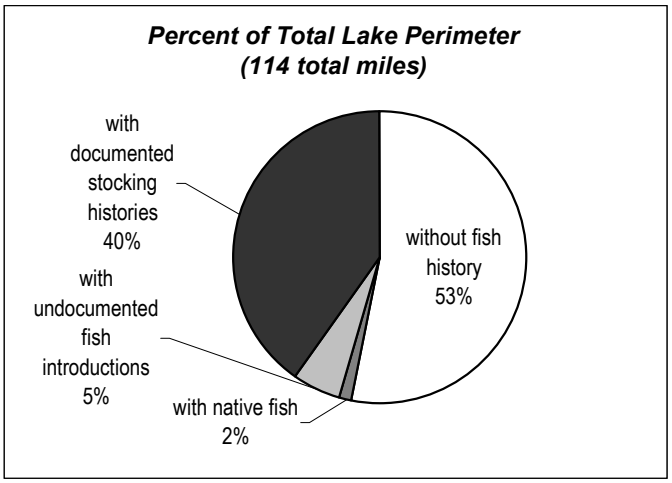
*Current Management Statistics of North Cascades National Park Service Complex Lakes**

NOCA Complex Waters	Number of Lakes	Percent of Total Lakes	Surface Area (Acres)	Percent of Total Area	Perimeter (Miles)	Percent of Total Perimeter
without fish history	455	81.3%	798.4	34.4%	60.3	52.9%
with native fish	9	1.6%	19.8	0.9%	1.7	1.5%
with undocumented fish introductions	13	2.3%	220.9	9.5%	6.1	5.3%
with documented stocking histories	83	14.8%	1,280.1	55.2%	45.7	40.2%
Total	**560**	**100.0%**	**2,319.2**	**100.0%**	**113.9**	**100.0%**
Waters with fish reproduction	**37**	**6.6%**	**893.2**	**38.5%**	**26.7**	**23.4%**
MOU Waters						
fishery supported by stocking	16	2.9%	160.4	6.9%	7.9	6.9%
fishery supported by stocking and reproduction	11	2.0%	302.7	13.1%	9.5	8.4%
fishery supported by wild population	13	2.3%	429.0	18.5%	10.7	9.4%
NRA Waters						
fishery supported by stocking	12	2.1%	69.3	3.0%	4.7	4.1%
fishery supported by stocking and reproduction	2	0.4%	13.1	0.6%	1.0	0.9%
fishery supported by wild population	11	2.0%	148.4	6.4%	5.4	4.7%
Total actively managed for fisheries	**65**	**11.6%**	**1,122.9**	**48.4%**	**39.2**	**34.4%**
Total stocked for fisheries	**41**	**7.3%**	**545.5**	**23.5%**	**23.1**	**20.3%**

*Data collected by WDFW







*Overnight Use Near Park Lakes with Fish**

Lake	Cross Country Zone or Camp	1999	2000	2001	2002	*Average*
Diobsud Lakes (2), Hi Yu Lake	Bacon Peak Cross Country Zone II	42	51	29	13	***34***
Bear Lake	Bear Mtn Cross Country Zone II	43	32	22	22	***30***
Berdeen Lake, Green Lake, Ipsoot Lake, Lower Berdeen Lake, Nert Lake	Berdeen Cross Country Zone II	27	55	76	32	***48***
Blum Lakes (2)	Blum Cross Country Zone II	33	29	57	30	***37***
Upper Bouck Lake	Bouck Cross Country Zone II	6	7	14	16	***11***
Copper Lake	Copper Lake Camp	76	273	433	291	***268***
Dagger Lake	Dagger Lake Camp (8)	93	132	140	95	***115***
Dagger Lake	Dagger Lake Stock Camp (8)	51	44	68	34	***49***
Mad Eagle Lake	Depot Cross Country Zone II	13	32	2	33	***20***
Doug's Tarn, Quill Lakes (2), Triumph Lake	Despair Cross Country Zone II	58	11	69	57	***49***
Hidden Lake	Hidden Lake Cross Country Zone I	118	90	138	103	***112***
Kettling Lake	Kettling Cross Country Zone II	2	8	12	6	***7***
Hanging Lake, Kwahnesum Lake	Little Chilliwack Cross Country Zone	2	0	16	1	***5***
Monogram Lake	Monogram Lake Camp	68	114	85	110	***94***
Firn Lake, No Name Lake, Skymo Lake	Prophet Cross Country Zone II	0	2	2	6	***3***
Sweetpea Lake, Torment Lake	Ragged Ridge Cross Country II	40	6	55	11	***28***
Jeanita Lake, Sourdough Lake	Sourdough Cross Country Zone II	46	57	41	29	***43***
Stiletto Lake	Stiletto Cross Country Zone II	46	46	87	50	***57***
Stout Lake, Stout Lake Pond, Wilcox Lakes (2)	Stout Lake Cross Country Zone II	53	79	24	23	***45***
Thornton Lakes (2)	Thornton Lake Camp	182	169	258	204	***203***
Trapper Lake	Trapper Inlet Camp	16	48	10	64	***35***
Trapper Lake	Trapper Lake Cross Country II	0	0	143	0	***36***
Trapper Lake	Trapper Outlet Camp	42	13	0	21	***19***
Total		**1,057**	**1,298**	**1,781**	**1,251**	***1,347***

*These figures represent backcountry overnight use (per person) in camps/cross country zones near lakes with fish.
We do not have day use data, nor do we have estimates of overnight use without a permit.
These numbers are our best estimates of current use: we do not know what percentage of these numbers represents people who are fishing as opposed to hiking, climbing, etc.

PREDISTURBANCE CONDITIONS OF NOCA LAKES

This document summarizes results of lentic research conducted in NOCA, 1989 – 1999. These results have provided investigators and resource managers with an understanding of baseline environmental conditions of NOCA lentic systems. It is assumed that many of these baseline conditions represent "natural conditions" in NOCA lakes and ponds, and that these conditions existed in lakes stocked with trout prior to the introduction of fish.

1. Physical Conditions (Liss et al. 1995; Larson et al. 1999)

A. NOCA is separated into two major climatic units created by the hydrologic divide of the Cascade Range: 1) west-side maritime climate and 2) east-side semiarid continental climate.
B. Lakes and ponds occur within four vegetation zones correlated with elevation: low forest, high forest, subalpine, alpine.
C. Lakes and ponds are present in multiple morphogenetic lake classes based on basin origin: cirque, trough, ice scour, moraine, bench, fault, slump, and kettle.

2. Water Chemistry (Larson et al. 1999)

A. On average, NOCA lakes are relatively cold, neutral in pH, low in concentrations of dissolved substances and nitrogen and phosphorus.
B. There is, however, considerable variation among lakes.
   1. In west-side lakes, water temperature, pH, alkalinity, conductivity, total Kjeldahl N, ammonia N, and total phosphorus decrease and nitrate N increases in concentration with increasing elevation.
   2. Shallow lakes (i.e., < 10 m in maximum depth) exhibit a wide range of values for alkalinity, conductivity, and concentrations of total Kjeldahl nitrogen and total phosphorus; and a greater percentage of shallow lakes have higher values for these variables than do deeper lakes.
C. Geology does not play a major role in segregating most NOCA lakes based on water quality.

3. Phytoplankton (Larson et al. 1998)

A. NOCA lakes exhibit a water-quality gradient that gradually changes from low to high concentrations of dissolved solids and total Kjeldahl nitrogen with decreasing lake elevation and increasing water temperature.
B. Phytoplankton cell densities increase along this elevation-temperature gradient, suggesting that phytoplankton productivity tends to increase with decreasing lake elevation and associated changes in water quality.
C. Species richness and species heterogeneity are positively correlated with phosphorus concentration.

4. Rotifers (Deimling et al. 1997)

A. Many rotifer taxa are widely distributed in NOCA lakes.
B. The most widely distributed species are *Kellicottia longispina* (90% of sampled lakes) and *Conochilus unicornis* (70% of sampled lakes).

C. Study lakes can be placed into 6 groups based on dominant rotifer taxon and lake parameters.
D. In lakes where rotifers are relatively dominant (i.e., where the overall mean is > 1.0 per liter), dominance of rotifer taxa is related to a complex interaction of physical and chemical parameters (nutrient levels, alkalinity, conductivity, temperature regime, lake elevation) and dominance and density of specific crustacean zooplankton.

5. Zooplankton: Diaptomid Copepods (Liss et al. 1998)

A. Five species of diaptomid copepods inhabit NOCA lakes: *Diaptomus kenai*, *D. arcticus*, *D. tyrelli, D. lintoni,* and *D. leptopus.*
B. The most common large diaptomid, *Diaptomus kenai,* is able to persist over a wide range of abiotic factors. *Diaptomus arcticus*, another large diaptomid species is much less common in NOCA lakes.
C. The small herbivorous diaptomid, *D. tyrelli,* is restricted to shallow lakes (i.e., maximum depth < ~ 10 m) with relatively high concentrations of total Kjeldahl nitrogen and total phosphorus.
D. A significant negative relationship exists between *D. tyrelli* density and the densities of the larger *D. kenai* and *D. arcticus*, suggesting a negative interaction between small and large diaptomids.

6. Nearshore Macroinvertebrates (Hoffman et al. 1996)

A. Eighty-eight nearshore macroinvertebrate taxa representing 16 taxonomic groups have been collected from 41 NOCA lakes.
B. The taxa are not widely distributed; 63 taxa (72%) are each present in eight or fewer lakes.
C. The distribution of taxa decreases with increasing elevation: 83% of taxa inhabit forest zone lakes; 61% inhabit subalpine lakes; and 16% inhabit alpine lakes.
D. The presence of nearshore macroinvertebrates in NOCA lakes is associated with the life history requirements and substrate preferences of taxa, and lake water temperature, elevation, and the substrate composition of the nearshore habitat.

7. Ambystomatid Salamanders (Tyler et al. 1998; Holmes and Glesne 1999; Liss et al. 2002)

A. *Ambystoma gracile* (northwestern salamander) and *Ambystoma macrodactylum* (long-toed salamander) are often the top vertebrate predators in mountain lakes and ponds.
B. Distribution is related to species life history requirements and habitat characteristics of lentic systems.
C. Northwestern salamanders occur only on the west-side of NOCA. Long-toed salamanders occur on the west- and east-sides of NOCA.
C. The two species rarely co-occur on the west-side, and long-toed salamanders are excluded from larger, deeper lakes and ponds by northwestern salamander neotenes.
D. Northwestern salamanders typically inhabit larger, deeper systems that have plenty of coarse wood and relatively soft, flocculent bottoms; long-toed salamanders, when northwestern salamanders are present, inhabit smaller, shallower systems that have plenty of aquatic vegetation and relatively hard bottoms.
E. On the east-side, long-toed salamanders are present in lentic systems regardless of size, depth, or substrate composition of the lake or pond bottom. On the west-side long-toed salamanders can also inhabit larger, deeper lakes and ponds when northwestern salamanders are not present.
F. Six additional amphibian species have been observed at NOCA lakes and ponds:

1. Frogs and toads: *Rana aurora* (red-legged frog)*, Rana cascadae* (Cascades frog)*, Rana luteiventris* (Columbian spotted frog), *Pseudacris regilla* (Pacific treefrog), *Bufo boreas* (western toad);
2. Salamanders: *Taricha granulosa* (rough-skinned newt).

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is a mountain lake?
It depends on who you ask. Elevation, surface area and depth are used by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as criteria in a decision curve that distinguishes lakes from other water bodies such as tarns and ponds. For example, very shallow water bodies, such as those that are one or two feet deep, are considered lakes if they are bigger than eight to ten acres in surface area. A water body that is 0.5 acres in area needs to be at least 20 feet deep to be considered a lake. In this EIS, all natural water bodies (no reservoirs) in the Complex will be considered mountain lakes using criteria of depth and surface area. If a water body in North Cascades has fish, it's probably a lake.

How many lakes are currently stocked?
- 27 lakes in the Park
- 14 lakes in the NRAs
- Note: 11 of the lakes in the park, and 2 of the lakes in the NRAs have reproducing populations that are supplemented with stocking.

How many lakes have reproducing fish populations?
- 24 lakes in the Park
- 13 lakes in the NRAs

What species of fish are currently stocked?
Rainbow trout, coastal cutthroat trout.

How many people fish in the mountain lakes?
The state (WDFW) estimated 175,324 anglers fished Washington high lakes in 1994. A small percentage of these anglers probably fish in Complex waters. Exact numbers are not known because specific data on anglers are lacking for the park and the NRAs.

Where are there similar fishing opportunities?
There are approximately 1,800 mountain lakes in Washington state that provide recreational fishing opportunities. Approximately 3% of these lakes (+/- 59) are within the Complex.

What is biological integrity?
The ability to support and maintain a balanced, integrated and adaptive assemblage of organisms having species composition, diversity and functional organization comparable to the natural habitat of the region. Changes that result from human actions cause a divergence from biological integrity-a decline in biological condition.

What did the NPS learn from the ecological research performed through Oregon State University on the ecological effects of stocked trout?
A wealth of information was learned over a 12-year period. The following results represent some of the key conclusions:
- There were no statistically significant impacts to native biota in large, deep, relatively cold lakes with low nutrient (Kjeldahl nitrogen) levels and low densities of non-reproducing fish;
- There were statistically significant impacts to zooplankton, insects and amphibians in lakes with relatively warm water and high nutrient (Kjeldahl nitrogen) content and high densities of reproducing fish.

This FAQ cannot begin to summarize all that was learned. Interested parties are strongly encouraged to review the research reports on the EIS website for the complete results. (www.nps.gov/noca/highlakes.htm)

How much did the research cost?
About $1.6 million, provided mainly through grants from the NPS, the National Science Foundation, and the USGS.

What is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?
NEPA is a law passed in 1969 that requires all federal agencies, including the National Park Service, to consider and document the potential impacts of management actions on the human environment. In the National Park Service, NEPA is applied as a planning process that evaluates alternative courses of action and impacts so that decisions are made in accord with the conservation and preservation mandate of the NPS Organic Act of 1916.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?
An EIS is a detailed NEPA document that is prepared when a proposed action or alternatives have the potential for significant impact on the human environment.

Why are we writing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?
An EIS is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to document analysis of impacts, public involvement, and the decisions made.

Why would we consider a management alternative that prohibits stocking?
To protect native ecosystem functions and values. In the EIS, prohibiting stocking will need to be considered as part of a management alternative that adheres to current NPS policy.

What is NPS policy on stocking?
- In Parks: stocking is prohibited in lakes that are naturally fishless.
- In NRAs: stocking is allowed if it is a historic practice, provided the same species are used.

How does the EIS relate to a Fishery Management Plan?
The EIS will consider the impacts of various management alternatives, and document how/why a particular alternative was chosen. It will provide the NPS with strategies and tactics for management. The Fishery Management Plan will build on the EIS and include timetables and other specific criteria for implementing management actions. In other words, the EIS will provide us with a "toolbox" of management actions and the plan will tell us how, when and where those tools will be used.

How will public comments be evaluated and incorporated into the EIS?
After the meetings, the NPS will prepare a public scoping comment summary report. This report will summarize what issues and topics were the subject of comment, the type of comments received on each issue, as well as a tally of comment origination (the report will be posted on the website). All substantive comments will be incorporated into the impact analysis and become part of the draft EIS.

What other agencies are involved?
WDFW is a cooperating agency. The EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Tribes will also be consulted.

When will we reach a final decision?
If there are no changes to the current schedule, in August 2004.

Written Comment Sheet

Scoping Meeting for the Mountain Lakes Fishery Management Plan EIS

PLEASE PRINT **DATE:**

****** CONTINUE ON BACK FOR MORE SPACE ******

Thank you for your input

NAME:
ORGANIZATION:
MAILING ADDRESS/CITY/STATE/ZIP:
EMAIL ADDRESS:

Names and addresses will be used to compile a mailing list for the Mountain Lakes Fishery Management Plan EIS. Please be advised that by including your name and address, you are agreeing to it being part of the EIS public record.

☐ **I would like to receive a paper copy of the Draft EIS**

☐ **I would like to receive a CD (compact disc) of the Draft EIS**

COMMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED THROUGHOUT THE EIS PROCESS BUT, TO BE MOST USEFUL DURING THE ANALYSIS, COMMENTS SHOULD BE RECEIVED BY **April 18, 2003**

PLEASE HAND THIS FORM IN OR MAIL BEFORE APRIL 18, 2003 TO:

Superintendent, North Cascades National Park
810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

Comments can also be submitted by emailing noca@den.nps.gov